

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie Medical Officer of Health / CEO

DATE: 2020 June 18

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS AND INSPECTION ACTIVITIES – Q1 OF 2020

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 027-20 re: “Public Health Inspector Enforcement Actions and Inspection Activities – Q1 of 2020” be received for information.

Key Points

- Enforcement actions include the issuance of provincial offence notices (tickets) as well as orders made under the Authority of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.7. Inspection activities include compliance inspections, re-inspections, on-site education and consultations.
- On March 17, 2020, following the declaration of a provincial emergency, the Chief Medical Officer of Health ordered the closure of many facilities including restaurants (except for take-out) and other facilities otherwise requiring routine inspections from MLHU resulting in a decrease in Q1 inspection activity.

Background

Beginning in 2020, Public Health Inspectors (PHI) at MLHU working within the Environmental Health and Infectious Disease (EHID) division began inspection work in routine areas; many of which include recreational water facilities, congregate living housing, food safety establishments and personal service settings. PHIs aim to address unsafe practices found within these environments which may have the potential to compromise the health of residents living within the city of London and Middlesex County. Activities that include routine inspections, follow-up inspections, consultations, education and enforcement are conducted by PHIs in an effort to assist operators achieve regulatory compliance and safe operation.

Towards the latter part of Q1 2020, a large number of inspected premises were required to suspend operations as a result of the Emergency Order from the Provincial Government ordering the closure of all non-essential businesses due to the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Some essential premises were permitted to remain open but were required to modify their operations in a manner that aimed to greatly reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission to the general public. An example includes restaurants closing the dining facility, but being permitted to remain open for take-out only.

Observations

The total number of inspections, infractions and enforcement actions are highlighted in the following chart as Q1 2020. The Total Inspections includes all routine inspections, re-inspections and complaint-based inspections. In total, there were 1,262 inspections. The number of premises requiring reinspection was 71 (a rate of 5.6%). This indicates a slightly lower rate than previous quarters which have typically fluctuated around 8%. On 4 occasions enforcement action was required to achieve compliance for food premises and recreational water facilities.

Demand work including the need to provide operator consultations and to respond to public service requests (complaints) began to increase in volume creating challenges in adhering to the work plans for PHIs. The need became evident in the early stages of the COVID response to establish new work priorities focusing on grocery stores and community kitchens serving vulnerable populations, as many restaurants, recreational water facilities and personal service settings were closed due to the provincial orders. Approximately 1/3 of staff in Environmental Health and majority of the Infectious Disease Control (IDC) team were required to be redeployed to COVID operations. As a result, programming supporting critical operations and vulnerable populations was prioritized. Programs such as rabies control, adverse water quality incidents, vector borne diseases and reportable disease follow ups were maintained along with health hazard risk assessment and investigation. Inspections and follow up in lower risk settings were scaled back during this time.

Q1 2020

Type of Inspection	Total Inspections	Non-Critical Infractions	Critical Infractions	Enforcement Actions
Child Care	55	4	0	0
Food Institutional & Other	85	13	3	0
Food Safety	831	311	105	2
Infection Control	17	4	0	0
Personal Service Settings	169	3	14	0
Recreational Water	100	31	19	2
Drinking Water	5	0	0	0

Summary

The number of inspections completed in Q1 was slightly reduced as compared to previous years due to the closure of facilities and the redeployment of staff in response to COVID-19. Much of the work conducted by PHIs towards the latter portion of Q1 and well into Q2 maintains supporting the local pandemic response by working with community operators and responding to reports of substandard COVID management practices. At present, a large component of the work now being conducted by Public Health Inspectors includes providing support and consultation to public inquiries regarding a variety of COVID-related questions and concerns.

Inspection reports for all inspected premises are publicly accessible at <http://inspections.healthunit.com>.

This report was prepared by the Food Safety Team, Environmental Health and Infectious Diseases Division.



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